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INFO LOG-00 AF-01 AID-01 AMAD-01 CA-02 CIAE-00 OASY-00
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FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0392
RWANDA COLLECTIVE

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E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: PREF, PHUM, RW, VT,
SUBJECT: CHURCHES AND RECONCILIATION IN RWANDA

1. SUMMARY. [REDACTED] IS
PERSUADED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA IS ANTI-CATHOLIC,
CITING HIS CLAIMS THAT MOST RWANDANS WHO RETURN TO THEIR
HOME AREAS ARE ARRESTED AND THAT ALL PRIESTS WHO RETURN
ARE ARRESTED WITHOUT CAUSE. HE ACCUSES THE GOVERNMENT OF
PREVENTING PEOPLE FROM FARMING. SIMILAR ATTITUDES AND
DIVISIONS ARE REPORTED AMONG THE PROTESTANT LEADERSHIP.
(COMMENT: THE CHURCHES DO NOT APPEAR TO BE LIKELY
PROMOTERS OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION IN THE NEAR TERM,
DESPITE THE IMPORTANT ROLE RELIGION HAS PLAYED IN PAST
RWANDAN LIFE AND THE HEALING ROLE THEY PROFESS
TRADITIONALLY AND UNIVERSALLY TO PLAY. END COMMENT).

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2. RECALLING THE TRADITIONAL WEIGHT OF RELIGION, ESPECIALLY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, AND THE ROLE THAT CHURCHES COULD PLAY IN FOSTERING RECONCILIATION RATHER THAN REINFORCING DIVISIONS AND MUTUAL HATREDS, VISITING REGIONAL REFCOORD (RRC) [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] TO ASSESS WHAT THE PROSPECTS MIGHT BE FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TO PLAY A ROLE IN THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS. [REDACTED] SAYS THAT THE RWANDAN BISHOPS HAVE WRITTEN TO THE GOVERNMENT CALLING FOR RECONCILIATION, BUT THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO RESPONSE. SEPARATELY, [REDACTED] CHARACTERIZED THE LETTER AS A DIATRIBE WHICH AMONG OTHER THINGS MADE GRATUITOUS COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW GOVERNMENTS. [REDACTED] SAYS THAT MINISTER OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS ANSWERED THE LETTER ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE, REFUTING THE ALLEGATIONS OF THE CHARGE AND LEAVING A SMALL WINDOW OPEN FOR FUTURE DIALOGUE. [REDACTED] OPINED THAT THE RWANDAN GOVERNMENT IS SIMPLY NOT INTERESTED IN RECONCILIATION, EVEN WHEN ASKED WHETHER THERE MIGHT BE A GOVERNMENT WILLINGNESS TO DIALOGUE WITH ELEMENTS OF RWANDAN SOCIETY WHICH WERE NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE GENOCIDE.

3. [REDACTED] SAID THAT HE HAS ALSO WRITTEN TO THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA TO ASK FOR THE RELEASE OF PRIESTS WHO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED. A FOURTH PRIEST WHO HAD VOLUNTARILY REPATRIATED FROM BUKAVU WAS ARRESTED THE DAY BEFORE THE RRC'S MEETING AND IS NOW IN DETENTION IN GITARAMA. THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA HAS NOT RESPONDED TO THIS LETTER.

[REDACTED] APPEARED INTERESTED IN RRC'S SUGGESTION THAT THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CHURCH OFFER TO TAKE THE PRIESTS INTO ITS CUSTODY WITH FULL GUARANTEES THAT THE PRIESTS WILL APPEAR WHEN THEIR CASES ARE CONSIDERED. (COMMENT: AT THE SAME TIME THAT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD REMOVE THE ARRESTED PRIESTS FROM THE OUTRAGEOUS CONDITIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA DETENTION CENTERS, IT WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH AND THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA TO BEGIN TO ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST. END COMMENT).

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4. TO RRC'S SUGGESTION THAT THE CHURCH NEEDS TO ACKNOWLEDGE IN A NATIONAL PASTORAL LETTER THAT THERE HAD BEEN A GENOCIDE IN WHICH THE CHURCH BORE SOME RESPONSIBILITY, NO MATTER HOW INDIRECT THE RESPONSIBILITY AND HOW CAREFULLY THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT WAS COUCHED, []

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[] RESPONDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS MAKING THE MISTAKE OF GENERALIZING ABOUT THE CHURCH BECAUSE QUOTE SOME MEMBERS DID NOT DO WELL UNQUOTE, DEMONSTRATING FOR HIM AGAIN ITS (THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA'S) STRONG ANTI-CATHOLIC SENTIMENTS. HE INSISTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA KNOWS THAT THE CHURCH RECOGNIZES ITS FAULT. RRC SAID HE THOUGHT THAT THE NATION, NOT JUST THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA, NEEDED TO HEAR THE CHURCH'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SOME RESPONSIBILITY. CRS HAS MADE THE SAME POINT TO THE NATIONAL BISHOP'S CONFERENCE LAST AUGUST, RRC LEARNED SUBSEQUENTLY.

5. IN ADDITION TO HIS CLAIM THAT PRIESTS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED WITHOUT CAUSE, [] CLAIMS THAT MOST REFUGEES WHO REPATRIATE ARE ARRESTED. RRC POINTED OUT THAT DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO GOMA, FROM WHERE MOST REFUGEES ARE REPATR

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IATING, UNHCR REPORTS AN AVERAGE OF ONE ARREST PER CONVOY. [] WAS NOT DISSUADED FROM HIS OPINION. []
[] ALSO SAYS THAT THE ARRESTS AND FEARS OF ARREST ARE PREVENTING PEOPLE FROM THEIR NORMAL AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES TO THE POINT WHERE MORE THAN HALF THE USUAL HARVEST HAS BEEN LOST.

6. IN A MEETING WITH THE [] RRC LEARNED THAT 13 PASTORS IN MUGUNGA CAMP HAVE TOLD THEIR PEOPLE THAT THEY BEAR NO GUILT FOR THE GENOCIDE WHICH OCCURRED IN RWANDA AND THAT THEY AND THEIR PEOPLE WILL NOT RETURN WITHOUT THEIR STRUCTURES, A EUPHUISM FOR THEIR MILITARY. [] ALSO REPORTEDLY DISCOURAGINGLY THAT A RECENT CONFERENCE IN NAIROBI OF PASTORS FROM RWANDA AND FROM THE DIASPORA DEGENERATED INTO AN ETHNIC BICKERING SESSION.

7. CRS SPONSORED A TWO-DAY WORKSHOP OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS AND OTHER CLERICAL AND LAY LEADERSHIP (ABOUT 15 THINKERS

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AND ACTORS) WHO WERE REALLY MEETING FOR THE FIRST TIME

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SINCE LAST YEAR'S GENOCIDE TO TALK ABOUT ISSUES. THE SESSIONS, FACILITATED BY PROFESSOR HIZKIAS ASSEFA, DIRECTOR OF THE NAIROBI PEACE INITIATIVE, WERE VERY WELL RECEIVED. CRS INTENDS TO ATTEMPT TO ORGANIZE MORE SUCH WORKSHOPS FOR THE CHURCH AND, IF POSSIBLE, GOR LEADERSHIP SEPARATELY.

8. COMMENT: AT LEAST IN THE NEAR TERM THE CHURCHES DO NOT APPEAR TO BE ABLE TO FOSTER A NATIONAL DIALOGUE AMONG CURRENT LEADERS AND ESTRANGED POLITICIANS WHETHER WITH OUR WITHOUT THE COUNTRY RECONCILIATION IN RWANDAN LIFE. THE ETHNIC DIVISIONS AND THE MATRED, FEAR AND MISTRUST
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WHICH LAST YEAR'S GENOCIDE HAVE BRED HAVE SO DIVIDED THE CHURCHES THAT THEY APPEAR UNABLE NOW TO ASSUME A ROLE SOME MIGHT HOPEFULLY HAVE EXPECTED THEM TO PLAY. END COMMENT.
RAWSON

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